

# GOODSPEED MUSICALS

## AUDIENCE INSIGHTS

# HELLO, DOLLY!



*50th Anniversary*

**GOODSPEED**  
MUSICALS®

The Max Showalter Center for  
Education in Musical Theatre

**HELLO, DOLLY!**

Goodspeed Opera House  
June 28 - Sept 8, 2013

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY  
**JERRY HERMAN**

BOOK BY  
**MICHAEL STEWART**

BASED ON "THE MATCHMAKER" BY  
**THORNTON WILDER**

LIGHTING DESIGN BY  
**JASON LYONS**

COSTUME DESIGN BY  
**WADE LABOISSONNIERE**

SCENIC DESIGN BY  
**ADRIAN W. JONES**

CHOREOGRAPHED BY  
**KELLI BARCLAY**

DIRECTED BY  
**DANIEL GOLDSTEIN**

PRODUCED FOR GOODSPEED  
MUSICALS BY  
**MICHAEL P. PRICE**

# HELLO, DOLLY!

## Audience Insights TABLE OF CONTENTS

Show Synopsis.....	3
Character Summary.....	4
Meet the Writers.....	5
Program Notes.....	7
Behind the Scenes: Costume Design.....	9
Behind the Scenes: Set Design.....	10
Director's Vision.....	11
The Birth of Dolly.....	12
Dolly's Journey.....	14
Famous Dollys.....	16
Resources.....	17

Audience Insights for *Hello, Dolly!* was prepared by:  
Joshua S. Ritter, M.F.A, Education & Library Director  
Christine Hopkins, M.A, Education & Library Assistant  
Katherine Griswold, Creative Content Manager

---

Goodspeed's Audience Insights can be found on our website:  
[www.goodspeed.org/pages/guides](http://www.goodspeed.org/pages/guides)

# SHOW SYNOPSIS

## ACT ONE

In 1890s New York City, Dolly Gallagher Levi is waiting at Grand Central Station to travel to Yonkers, NY. She is a well-known widowed matchmaker who is matching her client, Ambrose Kemper, with Horace Vandergelder's niece, Ermengarde. While Ambrose purchases the train tickets, Dolly confides in her late husband of her plans to pursue Horace Vandergelder for a marriage of her own.

Back in Yonkers at his feed store, Horace Vandergelder tells Ermengarde that he forbids her to marry Ambrose Kemper. As she weeps, he tells her to go pack for their trip to New York for the Fourteenth Street Association Parade.

Vandergelder informs his two clerks, Cornelius and Barnaby, that he will be going to New York for a trip. He explains his plan to return with a mistress, Miss Irene Molloy, another of Dolly's clients. He promotes Cornelius to Chief Clerk just as Dolly arrives at the store with Ambrose.

Dolly begins meddling and attempts to persuade Vandergelder into courting an "heiress" named Ernestina Money. He concedes but states that he will also call upon Irene Molloy as planned. Dolly also convinces Ambrose and Ermengarde that the only way to prove to Vandergelder that Ambrose can provide for her as a husband is by winning a polka dance contest at a New York restaurant named Harmonia Gardens.

Meanwhile, Cornelius and Barnaby conjure up a plan so that they can have a night of fun in New York without Vandergelder noticing. Cornelius states that they won't come back home to Yonkers until they have each kissed a girl.

In New York, Irene Molloy waits for Horace Vandergelder to call on her. Irene admits to her assistant, Minnie that she does not love Vandergelder and is marrying him for one reason: to get away from the millinery business. She expresses that she experienced true love with her late husband and now she's looking for adventure.

As Irene and Minnie discuss Irene's plan for a second marriage, Irene notices two men standing outside of her shop—Cornelius and Barnaby. In the craziness of the city, the two ended up at her store. They venture in and begin innocently flirting with Irene and Minnie. As they share conversation, the boys see Vandergelder approaching the store to call upon Irene.

Cornelius and Barnaby hide in the wardrobe and confusion erupts! Dolly arrives at the shop, calms things down, and Vandergelder leaves to attend the parade. Dolly advises that the two boys fix the situation by taking Irene and Minnie out dancing at Harmonia Gardens.

Dolly later meets a frustrated Vandergelder at the parade. He agrees to have dinner with Ernestina Money but fires Dolly as his matchmaker.

## ACT TWO

As Cornelius, Irene, Barnaby, and Minnie walk to Harmonia Gardens for dinner, Irene suggests that they take a car in order to get there on time. The men are low on funds and convince the ladies that walking is the most elegant way to journey anywhere in New York.

At Harmonia Gardens, the wait staff prepares to impress their guests of the evening, including their beloved Dolly Levi. Cornelius, Irene, Barnaby, and Minnie arrive at the restaurant and the two men privately stress over what to order for themselves and the ladies because they cannot afford the restaurant. Shortly after, Vandergelder arrives unhappy with Dolly's recommendation to have dinner with Ernestina. As a result, he once again questions Dolly's matchmaking skills.

Dolly arrives at the restaurant and the wait staff is ecstatic that their favorite customer has returned. Just as she had planned, Vandergelder approaches her expressing that he is having a terrible time. Dolly craftily confuses him into thinking that he actually wants to marry her but she says she will refuse his proposal. Then, to make matters even more confusing for Vandergelder, his wallet is accidentally switched with Barnaby's and he doesn't have enough money to pay for dinner.

The polka contest starts and Vandergelder sees Ambrose, Ermengarde, Cornelius, and Barnaby for the first time. He tries to sort it out, which causes pandemonium, and the police arrive to restore order. In court, Cornelius confesses his love for Irene and, touched by the song, the judge releases everyone except Vandergelder.

Vandergelder has been released and, back at the feed store, Cornelius announces that he plans to open his own business. Dolly speaks privately to her late husband, waiting for a sign of his approval for her to marry Vandergelder. She receives her sign when Vandergelder says something similar to what her husband said before he passed. She accepts a marriage proposal from Vandergelder.

## A NOTE FROM MR. WILDER

After seeing *Hello, Dolly!* for the first time, Thornton Wilder wrote a letter to Carol Channing which stated, "It's a dream come true! This is just what I had in mind when first thought of Dolly Levi. I wanted to try to recapture the warmth and excitement of the theatre of my youth. In this production your music, dancing, libretto, and performances are exactly what I imagined they should be. What a revelation!"



Carol Channing and Thornton Wilder

# CHARACTER SUMMARY

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Many of the names in *Hello, Dolly!* may have deeper meanings that relate to the character's personality or how they relate to the plot. Here are a few examples.

### **Dolly Gallagher Levi:**

Levi is Hebrew for "joining," and Gallagher is derived from the Gaelic *Ó Gallchobhair*, which means Foreign Help or Foreign Helper. These names perfectly describe Dolly's profession as matchmaker – she has the unique ability to help join two lives together in marriage.

### **Horace Vandergelder:**

The Dutch form of currency is the guilder, or gold coin, deriving from the German word for gold (*Geld*). Vandergelder, is an anglicized form of Van der guilder, literally meaning "of the guilder," or, more abstractly, "comes from money." Horace is easily the richest character in the play – in fact much of the story revolves around his money (and stinginess).

### **Ambrose Kemper:**

Kemper, from the German *kämpf*, means struggle. One who kempes strives for victory. Ambrose's surname fittingly relates to his struggle to gain Vandergelder's blessing to marry Ermengarde.

### **Ermengarde**

Ermine refers to the white coat of an animal in the weasel family. It became associated with purity by the early Middle Ages, perhaps because of its use as a heraldic emblem in the robes of judges and in the state robes of royal peers. Gard, an alternate spelling of guard, originated with the sense of keeping guardianship, custody, or warding. Ermengard has been kept pure and naïve by her uncle whose guardianship has shielded her from the outside world.

**MRS. DOLLY GALLAGHER LEVI:** A charming widowed matchmaker who decides to begin her life again and pursue a second marriage. She is multitasking, meddling and has the best intentions for herself and her clients.

**ERNESTINA MONEY:** An eccentric girl who is in need of Dolly's matchmaking skills. Dolly tries to pass Ernestina off as an heiress but she actually struggles financially.

**AMBROSE KEMPER:** A young and energetic artist who is good-natured and wants Vandergelder's permission to marry his niece, Ermengarde.

**HORACE VANDERGELDER:** A wealthy widower who is authoritative, gruff, and rough around the edges. He owns a Feed store in Yonkers, NY and is very set in his ways. Vandergelder believes that all people are fools.

**ERMENGARDE:** Horace Vandergelder's 17 year old dramatic and often whining niece. Ermengarde wants to marry Ambrose Kemper, a poor artist, but also values her position and reputation in society.

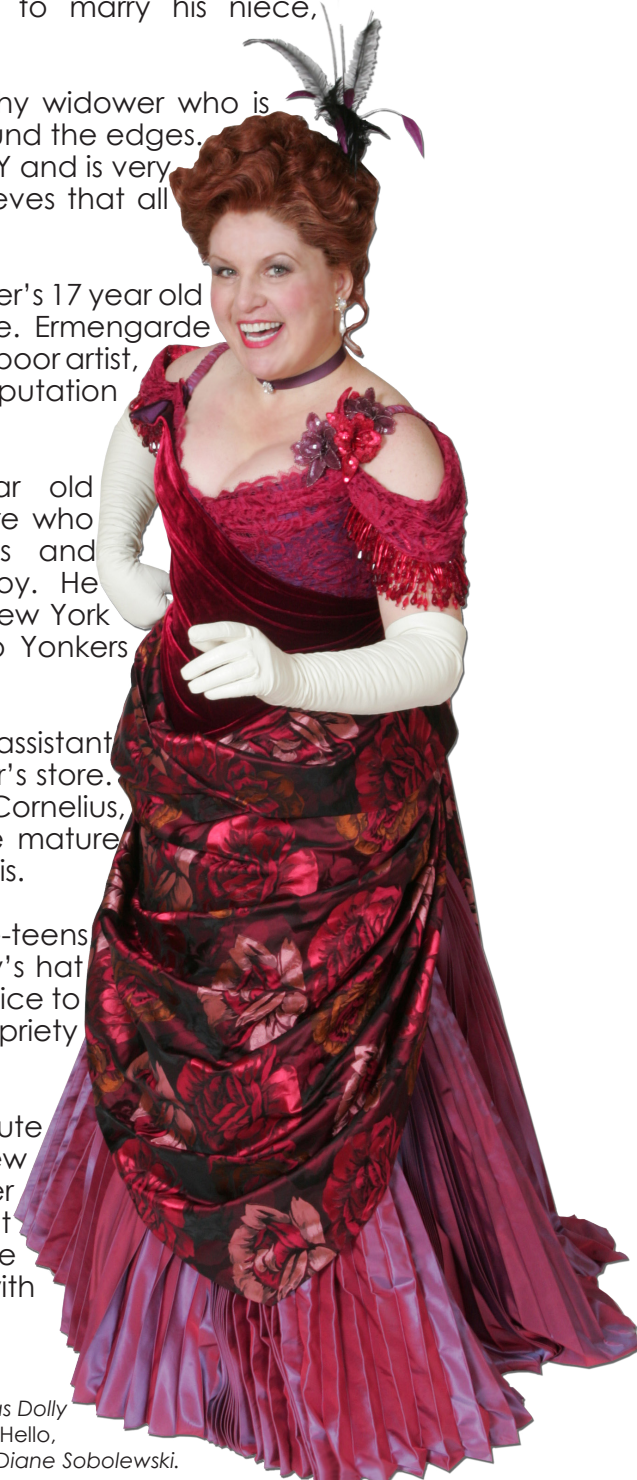
**CORNELIUS HACKL:** The 33 year old Chief Clerk of Vandergelder's store who is charming, naïve, adventurous and develops feelings for Irene Molloy. He plans a night-out-on-the-town in New York City and hopes to come back to Yonkers having kissed a girl.

**BARNABY TUCKER:** The 17 year old assistant to Cornelius Hackl at Vandergelder's store. He is innocent; more naïve than Cornelius, and tries to come across as more mature and experienced than he actually is.

**MINNIE FAY:** A young girl in her late-teens who is the assistant at Irene Molloy's hat shop. She is surprised by Irene's choice to marry without love and values propriety in society.

**IRENE MOLLOY:** A classy and astute millineress at a hat shop in New York City. Dolly tries to match her with Horace Vandergelder but instead Irene ends up spending time gallivanting through Manhattan with Cornelius, Barnaby, and Minnie.

*Klea Blackhurst as Dolly in Goodspeed's Hello, Dolly!. Photo by Diane Sobolewski.*



# MEET THE WRITERS



**JERRY HERMAN** (*Music and Lyrics*) was born in New York City on July 10, 1931 and was raised in Jersey City. His father, Harry, was a teacher and his mother, Ruth, was a performer and also ran a summer camp in the Catskills where Herman taught himself how to play the piano. Herman once recalled, "my parents took me at a tender age to see *Annie Get Your Gun*, I was absolutely dazzled. I have one of those retentive ears, and when I came home I sat down at the piano and played about five of the songs. My mother was amazed."

At the age of 17, Herman met Frank Loesser who, after hearing some of his songs, encouraged Herman to continue composing. Herman went on to the University of Miami to study drama and began creating revues and playing music at cocktail lounges. After graduating, Herman moved back to New York and staged a revue of his compositions titled *I Feel Wonderful*. The production was presented at the Theatre de Lys in Greenwich Village for 48 performances. In 1958, Herman opened another revue, titled *Nightcap*, at a New York City jazz club called the Showplace. Herman wrote the book and directed the show, which ran for two years.

In 1960, Jerry Herman began his career on Broadway. On April 20, 1960, *From A to Z* opened at the Plymouth Theatre and featured many songs written by him. Later in 1961, he was approached by a producer who asked if he would be interested in writing a musical about the founding of Israel. Herman accepted the offer, writing the music and lyrics to *Milk and Honey*, which awarded him nominations for a Grammy and a Tony Award.

In 1964, Herman wrote the music and lyrics for *Hello, Dolly!*. His work won him several Tony Awards, *Variety's* Best Composer and Best Lyricist Award, a Gold Record, and a Grammy Award. In 1966, Herman wrote the music and lyrics to *Mame* which brought him similar successes. In the years to follow, Herman would write the music and lyrics for many other successful productions such as *Dear World*, *Mack & Mabel*, *Jerry's Girls*, and *La Cage Aux Folles*.

In 2009, Jerry Herman won the Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement. In 2010, Herman was awarded a Special Drama Desk Award for "enchanting and dazzling audiences with his exuberant music and heartfelt lyrics for more than half a century" and, in 2010, he was recognized at the Kennedy Center Honors gala.



**CLICK HERE** to listen to an NPR interview with Jerry Herman



**CLICK HERE** to watch an interview with Jerry Herman on PBS' "innerVIEWS"



**CLICK HERE** to watch "Words and Music by Jerry Herman"



**"When they passed out talent, Jerry stood in line twice."  
- Carol Channing -**

Composer Jerry Herman (Photo by Henri Dauman)  
© Sony Music Entertainment. Courtesy of Sony Music Archives

# MEET THE WRITERS CONTINUED



**MICHAEL STEWART** (*book*) graduated from the Yale School of Drama in 1953. He began his career creating sketches and writing lyrics for revues that were produced at Green Mansions, a summer resort in New York. He contributed to the written materials for *Shoestring Revues* and worked on the concert adaptation of *Candide*.

Stewart's Broadway debut, *Bye Bye Birdie*, was a major success and awarded him the Tony Award for his libretto. As a result, he was readily sought after and wrote the libretto for *Carnival*, which won him a Drama Critics Circle Award; *Hello, Dolly!*, which won him both Tony and Drama Critics Awards; *42nd Street*; *George M!*; *Mack & Mabel*; *Harrigan 'n Hart*; and *The Grand Tour*. He also wrote both the book and lyrics for *I Love My Wife* and the lyrics for *Barnum*.

Stewart died in New York City on September 20, 1987 at the age of 63. After his passing, Jule Styne said of him "he was an extremely talented and knowledgeable man of the theatre. He was one of the great musical theatre writers, and his string of hits showed that."

**THORNTON WILDER** (*Original Play*) was born on April 17, 1897 in Madison, Wisconsin. His father was the United States Consul General to Hong Kong and Shanghai so Wilder spent many of his childhood years living in China. In 1920, his mother was the first woman to be elected to public office in Hamden, Conn.

Wilder went to high school in California and graduated in 1915. After high school, he studied Greek and Roman Classics at Oberlin College. Two years later, his family moved to New Haven, Conn. and Wilder enrolled at Yale University. In 1920, Wilder received his B.A. from Yale University and his first full-length play, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, was printed in Yale Literary Magazine. In 1926, he received his Master's degree in French Literature from Princeton University and *The Trumpet Shall Sound* was produced for the stage at The American Laboratory Theatre in New York City.

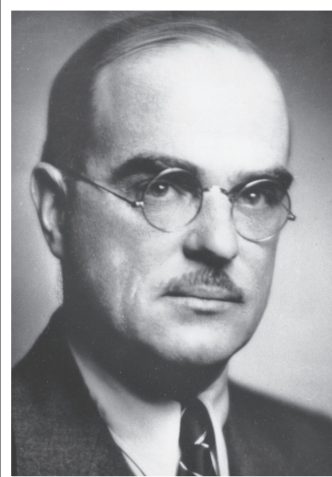
Wilder's breakthrough novel, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, was published in 1927 and won him his first Pulitzer Prize. In 1938, Wilder wrote the successful play, *Our Town*, and won his second Pulitzer Prize making him the only American writer to win for both fiction and drama. In 1942, he wrote the highly acclaimed play, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, winning him his third Pulitzer Prize and in 1943, Wilder shifted his focus over to cinema and began working on Alfred Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt*.

When World War II began, Wilder enlisted in the Air Force and ultimately earned the Legion of Merit and Bronze Star. After his discharge, Wilder wrote *The Ides of March* in 1948. In the years to follow, he authored many works of literature and received many awards, including the American Academy of Arts and Letters Gold Medal for Fiction, the National Book Award, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

On December 7, 1975, Wilder died at the age of 78 in Hamden, Conn. where he lived with his sister, Isabel.



**CLICK HERE** to listen to a 1977 interview with Michael Stewart



**CLICK HERE** to learn more about Thornton Wilder



**CLICK HERE** to learn more about *The Matchmaker*

# PROGRAM NOTES BY JOSHUA RITTER



Jerry Herman and Carol Channing  
Photo by Henri Dauman  
© Sony Music Entertainment  
Courtesy of Sony Music Archives



Carol Channing as Dolly Levi  
© Sony Music Entertainment  
Courtesy of Sony Music Archives

When *Hello, Dolly!* opened on Broadway in January of 1964, the nation was still reeling from the shock of President Kennedy's assassination and apprehensive about the worsening situation in Vietnam. The Beatles invasion had just begun; a youthful fervor for change and rock 'n' roll was palpable. David Merrick, a preternaturally gifted producer, could sense the longing of another American generation. He undoubtedly knew the time was right to provide the comfort and nostalgia of a good old-fashioned Broadway musical. After all, he was in possession of a successful theatrical property that was screaming to be set to music. It could also serve as a star vehicle for Ethel Merman, and it contained a 1890s period flavor that would offer much-needed diversion from current events. Merrick began assembling a team of future Broadway legends to give music and new life to Thorton Wilder's highly-successful play *The Matchmaker*. The title would quickly change to *Dolly! A Damned Exasperating Woman; Call on Dolly!*; and finally to *Hello, Dolly!*.

Merrick hired Gower Champion and Michael Stewart, with whom he had previously worked on *Carnival*, to stage and adapt the book for what would later be called *Hello, Dolly!*. Merrick hired the young Jerry Herman to compose the music soon after his success penning the score for his first Broadway musical, *Milk and Honey*. Champion, Stewart, and Herman worked together to anchor the show to the title song and "Put on your Sunday Clothes." These became massive production numbers, the former involving whirling waiters, trays of food, and Dolly Levi's grand descent down a flight of stairs. The latter was comprised of vibrant costumes, characters promenading in front of the Yonkers Depot, and a railroad engine car with a functioning

smokestack. Both numbers built to a climax and then pushed beyond the limits of audience expectation. Unfailingly, the combined sensory and emotional effect of these scenes resulted in audiences erupting into applause.

Since these numbers were not essential or fully explained by the book, some considered them provocative. One of the reasons Hal Prince turned down an offer to direct *Hello, Dolly!* was because the book does not explain why the waiters are overjoyed to welcome Dolly Gallagher Levi back to the Harmonia Gardens. On the other hand, Champion, Stewart, and Herman were not afraid to divorce from the plot and literally manufacture the most show-stopping moments in the production. Their efforts worked brilliantly in this case, leaving us with some of the most iconic moments in Broadway history.

The success of the show also grew from Carol Channing's luminosity, hilarity, and personality in the defining role of her career as Dolly Levi. Channing was followed by a series of well-known stars in the title role, beginning with Ginger Rogers, then Martha Raye, Betty Grable, Bibi Osterwald (standby and replacement), Pearl Bailey as part of an all-black version with Cab Calloway, Phyllis Diller, and, finally, Ethel Merman in 1970. Although Ethel Merman was Merrick's first choice to play Dolly Levi, she did not accept the role until many years later because she was considering other offers and recovering from her long run in *Gypsy*. As the eighth and final Dolly Levi in *Hello, Dolly!*, a part that was written for her, Merman said farewell to Broadway.

In addition to the star power described above, serendipity, source material, and inspiration helped propel *Hello, Dolly!*'s monumental success. *Hello, Dolly!* makes use of tested theatrical conventions such as archetypal characters that have delighted audiences since the time of Plautus; for example, the show includes the

# PROGRAM NOTES CONTINUED



Carol Channing and Jerry Herman  
Courtesy of the Collection of Carol  
Channing.

familiar miserly curmudgeon, heroine, dull servant, and ingénue.

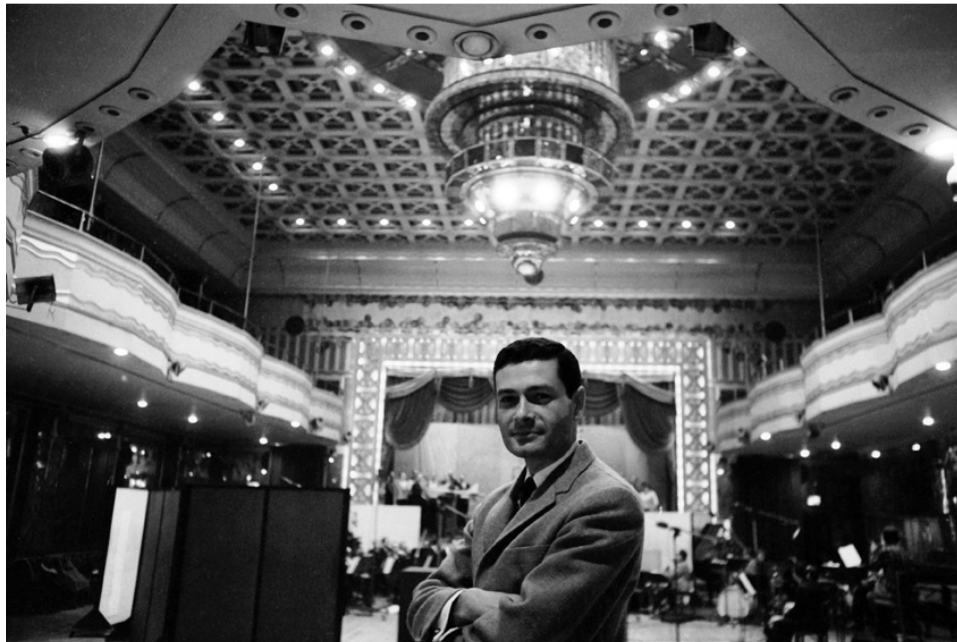
The source material for *Hello, Dolly!* has been deftly refined and improved since John Oxenford first penned it in 1835 as a one-act English farce entitled *A Day Well Spent*. In 1842, Johann Nestroy, "the Austrian Shakespeare," attempted to improve upon Oxenford's play by writing a German version entitled *Einen Jux will er sich machen*. The Vienna Brugtheatre brought Nestroy's edition to New York and it piqued the interest of celebrated playwright Thornton Wilder. He adapted the German

version of the play as *The Merchant of Yonkers*, which was produced in 1938. Despite the show's box office failure, distinguished director Tyrone Guthrie expressed interest in mounting a revival for the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland in 1954. Fortunately, at Guthrie's urgings, Wilder revised the script and changed the title to *The Matchmaker*. The hit show starred

Ruth Gordon in the expanded role of Dolly Levi. Merrick moved *The Matchmaker* to London, then to New York where it was transformed into a beloved musical phenomenon.

*Hello, Dolly!* is one of the most lauded, enduring, melodious, and visually stunning musicals in history. It played for an unprecedented 2,844 performances on Broadway at the St. James Theatre. It also earned ten Tony Awards, a record that remained unbroken for 37 years. Thanks to a masterful combination of spectacle and storytelling, *Hello, Dolly!* continues to entertain us while affirming a fundamental human truth. It reminds us that we all need companionship, despite the (sometimes hilarious) challenge of finding and connecting with others.

Goodspeed's *Hello, Dolly!* is directed by Daniel Goldstein, who directed the recent Broadway revival of *Godspell* and Goodspeed's *The Unauthorized Autobiography of Samantha Brown* at The Norma Terris Theatre. Goldstein can relate to the period of transition and uncertainty that the characters face at the top of the show. Goldstein states "I know that I've experienced those moments when my entire life seemed to hinge on a single day, when jumping off a precipice into an uncertain future is not only the most difficult thing to do, it's the only thing to do." *Hello, Dolly!* is a call to action; it urges us to leap into the unknown, to find love, to infuse our lives with the same spirit and bravery that drives Dolly Levi to overcome her grief "before the parade passes by." Thank you for choosing to adventure with us from quaint East Haddam to the rollicking streets and establishments of 1890s New York City. "It's so nice to have you back where you belong!"



Jerry Herman at the cast album  
recording session.  
Photo by Henri Dauman  
© Sony Music Entertainment  
Courtesy of Sony Music Archives



# BEHIND THE SCENES

COSTUME DESIGN BY WADE LABOISSONNIERE

## 1890s FASION

Dresses in the early 1890s had tight bodices and skirts that gathered at the waist. In the mid 1890s skirts took on an A-line silhouette that was almost bell-like. The late 1890s featured tighter sleeves often with small puffs or ruffles capping the shoulder but fitted to the wrist. Skirts took on a trumpet shape, fitting more closely over the hip and flaring just above the knee. Corsets in the 1890s helped define an hourglass figure.

Changing attitudes about acceptable activities for women also made sportswear popular for women, with such notable examples as the bicycling dress and the tennis dress.

For men's fashion, the overall silhouette of the 1890s was long, lean, and athletic. Hair was generally worn short, often with a pointed beard and generous moustache.



# BEHIND THE SCENES SCENIC DESIGN BY ADRIAN W. JONES





Daniel Goldstein.  
Photo by Diane Sobolewski.

## Tell us about your vision and inspirations for *Hello, Dolly!*

*Hello, Dolly!* is one of a handful of perfect musicals in the American canon, and it's a genuine honor to recreate it for the Goodspeed Musicals audience. As the show begins, we meet each of the characters at real turning points in their lives. As Dolly says in *The Matchmaker* (the Thornton Wilder play upon which *Hello, Dolly!* is based), there is "a moment in everybody's life when he must decide whether he'll live among human beings or not—a fool among fools or a fool alone." I know that I've experienced those moments when my entire life seemed to hinge on a single day, when jumping off a precipice

into an uncertain future is not only the most difficult thing to do, it's the only thing to do. These are wounded and defensive people who ultimately, through friendship, music and a sense of adventure, find love.

**"We have one of the strongest casts I've ever assembled"**

## What makes Goodspeed the perfect fit for this production? What are the challenges to staging in this unique venue?

*Hello, Dolly!* is an enormous show. The original Broadway cast featured 44 cast members on stage at the St. James Theater, which features a 30 foot proscenium and 1600 seats. We have 21 actors and Goodspeed Opera House features a 26 foot proscenium and 398 seats. Needless

to say, we are more intimate here in East Haddam. We refer to this as "Goodspeed-izing" the show. Set Designer Adrian Jones and I have created a unit set that simply and easily transforms from a street in New York City to Vandergelder's Feed Store to a hat shop to the Harmonia Gardens, all by changing small details like window dressing and furniture. But throughout this, we always remain in a train station—based on the sadly demolished Pennsylvania Station—a place of transition, a place of coming and going. Most importantly, it keeps our focus on the actors and the musical itself.

## What the audience can expect to see?

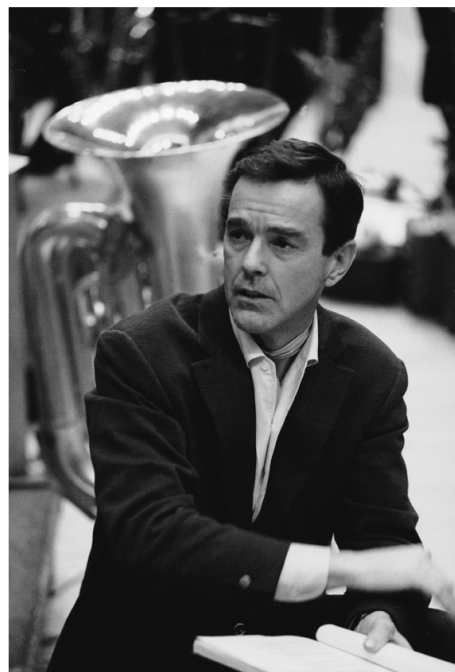
I'd like to leave you with the words of Barnaby, also the last words of *The Matchmaker*. Dolly asks him to tell the audience what the moral of the play is, and he's pushed forward to the footlights and says:

*"Oh, I think it's about...I think it's about adventure. The test of an adventure is that when you're in the middle of it, you say to yourself, "Oh, now I've gotten myself into an awful mess; I wish I were sitting quietly at home." And the sign that something's wrong with you is when you sit quietly at home wishing you were out having lots of adventure. What we would like for you is that you have just the right amount of sitting quietly at home, and just the right amount of— adventure! So that now we all want to thank you for coming tonight, and we hope that in your lives you have just the right amount of—adventure!"*

We have one of the strongest casts I've ever assembled, and I think you'll agree. And we all thank every one of you for coming on this adventure with us.

# THE BIRTH OF DOLLY

Excerpt from  
David Merrick: "The Abominable Showman"  
by Howard Kissel



Gower Champion  
Photo by Henri Dauman  
© Sony Music Entertainment  
Courtesy of Sony Music Archives



David Merrick and Carol Channing

From the moment he acquired the rights to present Thornton Wilder's play *The Matchmaker* on Broadway in 1955, producer David Merrick was convinced Wilder's play would make a great musical.

He enlisted Gower Champion and Michael Stewart, who had both worked for him on *Carnival!*, to be director/choreographer and book writer for the show. To write the score, Merrick called Jerry Herman, a shy young songwriter who'd had a great hit at the age of 26 with a Greenwich Village revue called *Nightcap*. Merrick had also seen and admired Herman's 1961 Broadway musical, *Milk and Honey*, about the young state of Israel.

Herman entered Merrick's red office with no little trepidation; Merrick's reputation had preceded him. After a little chitchat, Merrick explained that though he had liked *Milk and Honey* very much, he was concerned that the score was too ethnic. The musical based on the Wilder play had to sound like Americana.

"Mr. Merrick, that was my assignment," Herman pleaded. But, he could see Merrick was not convinced. This was a Friday. He told Merrick he would write four songs based on moments in the play to prove he could compose "Americana."

Herman raced back to his Village walk-up, read *The Matchmaker* and selected four scenes to set to music. Monday he called Merrick and asked if he could play them for him.

Merrick saw instantly the material was right for the show. (Three of the audition songs, in fact, remained in the final version: "Dancing," "I Put My Hand In" and "Put On Your Sunday Clothes.") Merrick was also impressed by the speed with which Herman worked.

**"Kid, the show is yours."**

Carol Channing, already a bona fide Broadway star, was at that time performing her night club act in the

Empire Room of the Waldorf Astoria and similarly elegant rooms all across the country. Merrick caught her act in Minneapolis, where he first mentioned the possibility of her starring in *The Matchmaker* musical (then titled *Dolly! A Damned Exasperating Woman*). He later invited her to his office to discuss the project and found she had become passionate about the role of Dolly Gallagher Levi. She noted it was the one thing Thornton Wilder had added to the Johann Nestroy play on which he had based *The Matchmaker*. In *Dolly*, Channing felt, Wilder poured his intense belief in the need to affirm life.

Merrick, deeply impressed, took Gower Champion to see Channing so she could read for him. They ended up discussing the role until 5 in the morning. It was overpowering. The role was hers.

The show began its out-of-town try-out at Detroit's Fisher Theatre in late fall of 1963. But it was not yet in focus and audiences were not enthusiastic. The Detroit reviewers doubted it would even reach New York. One headlined his review, "Goodbye, Dolly!."

After considerable rewriting (including the addition of "Before the Parade Passes By," necessitating a new set and many lavish new costumes), *Hello, Dolly!* moved on to Washington's National Theatre, where it was received enthusiastically. *Dolly* now looked like it might be a huge hit.

That hunch was confirmed when it opened at the St. James Theatre on January 16, 1964 and received ecstatic reviews. In those traumatic months following the assassination of John F. Kennedy, *Hello, Dolly!* was the perfect antidote to melancholy. The score had great appeal. Channing's performance was effervescent. The lavish sets and costumes evoked a more innocent, happier New York. If any musical was likely to raise the spirits of its audience, it was *Hello, Dolly!*.

And so it has, for more than thirty years.

# THE BIRTH OF DOLLY CONTINUED

A letter from Theatre Guild's Lawrence Langner to Thornton Wilder's agent Harold Freedman shows early interest in a musical adaptation of *The Matchmaker*.



## The THEATRE GUILD

23 West 53rd Street  
New York 19, N. Y.  
Tel. COlumbus 5-6170

✓  
DEC 19 1956

THERESA HELSBURN    LAWRENCE LANGNER    ARMINA MARSHALL

December 18, 1957

Mr. Harold Freedman  
Brandt and Brandt  
101 Park Avenue  
New York, N. Y.

Re: THE MATCHMAKER

Dear Harold:

As I told you over the phone, the Theatre Guild is very much interested in making a musical play of *THE MATCHMAKER*. We think it would make an excellent libretto for Judy Holliday, Ethel Merman, or Mary Martin.

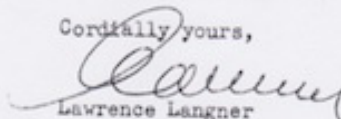
As you know, it takes a couple of years to turn a play into a musical and of course *THE MATCHMAKER* would have to be done as a film first. However, I would like to make the necessary arrangements with you and Thornton now as I feel sure that it will take care of all our later years with one or other of these women in the part.

You of course realize that in a musical play the part of Mrs. Levy would have to be played much younger and I am sure this would help. As you know, Judy Holliday was lovely in *SOLID GOLD CADILLAC* where she played the part which had originally been played by Josephine Hull. From your experiences with *THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED*, you know that it takes quite a time to get a musical play started, but if Thornton would give me the authority to go ahead in the matter, I could start contacting musicians, etc. so that the production could open very soon after the picture had played. Through former experiences, I assume you would have some definite ideas about royalties, etc.

I would like to bring the idea to the attention of Richard Rogers or Hammerstein or some other top writers and would give it the same careful attention that we have given to our other musicals. If you will remember, Harold Rome wanted us to make this into a musical in the first instance and I believe that Thornton was interested in the idea in a general way but Tyrone Guthrie was opposed to it.

With all good wishes,

Cordially yours,

  
Lawrence Langner

P.S. Philip, of course, would be involved in this production.

cc: Mr. Thornton Wilder

# DOLLY'S JOURNEY

## DOLLY AS A PLAY

The plot associated with *Hello, Dolly!* existed long before the musical opened on Broadway in 1964. Throughout the years of its development, the story went through many changes. The plot of two young store clerks leaving their workplace for a night on the town (donned in their Sunday best) originated from John Oxenford's 1835 one act play, *A Day Well Spent*. The plot then reappeared in Johann Nestroy's satirical comedy, *Einen Jux will er sich machen*.

After seeing Nestroy's play, Max Reinhardt, a German director, approached Thornton Wilder with the script and recommended that he rework it. Wilder agreed to the project and created *The Merchant of Yonkers*; a culmination of influences from Nestroy's play and Moliere's *The Miser*. It was in *The Merchant of Yonkers* that the role of Dolly Gallagher Levi was born. Unfortunately, the play was not well received by New York audiences and closed after 39 performances.

In the 1950s, Wilder reworked *The Merchant of Yonkers*. He changed the title, chose a different target audience, and debuted *The Matchmaker* in 1954. The play was the highlight of the Edinburgh Festival in England and eventually landed on Broadway in December 1955, lasting 486 performances.

In 1958, a filmed version of *The Matchmaker* was released that starred Shirley Booth as Dolly Gallagher Levi, Paul Ford as Horace Vandergelder, Shirley MacLaine as Irene Molloy, Robert Morse as Barnaby Tucker, and Anthony Perkins as Cornelius Hackl.

## LET'S MAKE A MUSICAL!

Thornton Wilder was reluctant to release the rights to adapt *The Matchmaker* into a musical. Eventually, producer David Merrick convinced him and put together the ultimate team for the project, including

librettist Michael Stewart who had previously written the books for *Bye Bye Birdie* and *Carnival*. Additionally, Merrick commissioned a very young Jerry Herman to compose the score. Before he accepted Herman on the team however, Merrick needed to be convinced that the young writer could capture the "Americana" feel that he envisioned for the piece. As a result, Herman asked for the opportunity to prove his abilities by writing songs for the musical. Herman composed four songs over the weekend. Herman then had a 15 minute audition with Merrick and, after he played the four songs, Merrick stood up and said, "Kid, the show is yours."

Merrick offered the director position to several people before landing on the perfect fit. He offered the position to Jerome Robbins, Joe Layton, and Harold Prince, who said he would accept the job only if "Hello, Dolly!," the title song, was cut. He stated, "I couldn't for the life of me see why those waiters were singing how glad they were to have her back where she belonged, when she'd never been there in the first place." Ultimately, Merrick hired director and choreographer Gower Champion. Champion had previously directed and choreographed *Bye Bye Birdie* and *Carnival* on Broadway and had worked with Merrick on seven shows.

The production, with the working title of *Dolly! A Damned Exasperating Woman* at that time, was intended to showcase Ethel Merman as Dolly, but she turned it down. The role was then offered to Broadway veteran, Carol Channing and, during its out-of-town tryout, the title was changed twice; first to *Call on Dolly* and then finally to *Hello, Dolly!*

When the production went to Broadway in 1964, the script was polished and ready for New York audiences. The show was a hit and, just 3 days after opening, a cast album was produced by RCA Victor Records selling 80,000 copies during the first week of its release.



Jerry Herman and cast rehearsing for *Hello, Dolly!*

# DOLLY'S JOURNEY CONTINUED



Louis Armstrong and Barbra Streisand in *Hello, Dolly!* film

The St. James and Minskoff Theatres had many actresses come through its doors to play Dolly Levi. Included among them were Ginger Rogers, Betty Grable, Bibi Osterwald, Phyllis Diller, and Martha Raye. The final actress to play Dolly before the show closed in 1970 was Ethel Merman, for whom the role of Dolly was originally designed. With Merman now in the role, two songs that were written for her and ultimately removed when she initially declined the role, were reinstated. On December 26, 1970, the show closed after 2,844 performances.

## HELLO, DOLLY! ON THE BIG SCREEN

In March, 1965, 20th Century Fox acquired the rights to turn *Hello, Dolly!* into a movie-musical. At roughly \$22 million, it was the most expensive musical film made to that day. Production on the film began in 1969 and, though it was a hit in the box office, it lost money because of the large expenses. There were many contenders for the role of Dolly and several actresses like Carol Channing and Lucille Ball were passed over for the opportunity. The team landed on the 27 year old Barbara Streisand for the iconic role, though many complained that she was too young. Additional cast members included Walter Matthau as Horace Vandergelder, Michael Crawford as Cornelius Hackl, Tommy Tune as Ambrose Kemper, and Louis Armstrong as the Orchestra Leader. The film was directed by Gene Kelly and won 3 Academy Awards.

## THE GROWTH OF DOLLY

### 1835: A DAY WELL SPENT

This one act play, written by John Oxenford, is about two store clerks, Bolt and Mizzle, from the English countryside who have a night out in London.

### 1842: EINEN JUX WILL ER SICH MACHEN

Loosely translated, "He Will Have His Fling," this play, written by Viennese playwright Johann Nestroy, is an adaptation of John Oxenford's *A Day Well Spent*. The plot follows an aging merchant who goes on a trip to an Austrian city in search of a second wife.

### 1938: THE MERCHANT OF YONKERS

Thornton Wilder's adaptation of *Einen Jux will er sich machen*. In this version, he named the matchmaker character that the merchant interacts with, Dolly Gallagher Levi and set the plot in early 1880s New York City.

### 1954: THE MATCHMAKER

Thornton Wilder's revision of *The Merchant of Yonkers* that placed more focus on Dolly as the central character. The play first appeared at the Edinburgh Festival, then opened in London, and finally landed on Broadway in 1955.

### 1964: HELLO, DOLLY!

The musical adaptation of *The Matchmaker* that was originally titled *Dolly! A Damned Exasperating Woman*. The book was written by Michael Stewart and the music and lyrics were written by Jerry Herman.

# FAMOUS DOLLYS



Ginger Rogers



Mary Martin



Martha Raye



Betty Grable

## CAROL CHANNING

Broadway  
January 16, 1964 - August 7, 1965  
March 5, 1978- July 9, 1978  
October 19, 1995- January 28, 1996

## GINGER ROGERS

Broadway: August 9, 1965 - February 25, 1967

## MARY MARTIN

London Production: December 2, 1965 - ?

## MARTHA RAYE

Broadway: February 27, 1967 - June 1967

## BETTY GRABLE

Broadway: June 12, 1967 - November 5, 1967

## PEARL BAILEY

Broadway  
November 12, 1967 - December 1969  
November 6, 1975 - December 28, 1975

## PHYLLIS DILLER

Broadway: December 26, 1969 - December 27, 1970

## BARBARA STREISAND

Film: 1969

## ETHEL MERMAN

Broadway: March 28, 1970 - December 27, 1970



Carol Channing



Pearl Bailey



Phyllis Diller



Barbra Streisand



Ethel Merman



# RESOURCES

## **THE WRITERS, SYNOPSIS, AND CHARACTERS**

Gerard, Jeremy. "Michael Stewart Is Dead 63; Author of Broadway Musicals." *The New York Times*, 21 Sept. 1987. <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/09/21/obituaries/michael-stewart-is-dead-63-author-of-broadway-musicals.html>

"*Hello, Dolly!* Synopsis." Theatre Under the Stars. <http://www.tuts.com/Images/SeasonShowDocs/Hello,%20Dolly!%20Synopsis.pdf>

Herman, Jerry and Stewart, Michael. *Hello, Dolly!*. New York: Tams-Witmark Music Library, INC. 1964. Print.

"Jerry Herman." The Kennedy Center. [http://www.kennedy-center.org/explorer/artists/?entity\\_id=4388&source\\_type=A](http://www.kennedy-center.org/explorer/artists/?entity_id=4388&source_type=A)

Kenrick, John. *Musical Theatre: A History*. London: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc. 2008.

## **ARTICLE**

Crowley, Dennis. "The Birth of Dolly." *Hello, Dolly! Souvenir Program*. Miami Beach: Diamond Bullet Merchandising, Inc. Print.

## **DOLLY'S JOURNEY, THE GROWTH OF DOLLY, FAMOUS DOLLY'S**

Bloom, Ken & Vlastnik, Frank. *Broadway Musicals: The 101 Greatest Shows of All Time*. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers. 2004.

Citron, Stephen. *Jerry Herman: poet of the showtune*. Vail-Ballou Press. 2004. Print.

Cryer, Max. *Love Me Tender: The Stories Behind the World's Favourite Songs*. New Zealand: Exisle Publishing Limited. 2008.

Ganzl, Kurt. *The Musical: A Concise History*. Boston: Northeastern University Press. 1997.

Gilvey, John Anthony. *Before the Parade Passes By*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 2005. Print.

Kissel, Howard. *David Merrick-The Abominable Showman: the unauthorized biography*. New York: Applause Books. 1993. Print.

Prideaux, Tom. "A Great Big Hello for Dolly." *LIFE Magazine*, 3 Apr. 1964.

Van Straten, Frank. "It's Nice to Have You Back Where You Belong." Queensland Performing Arts Trust Souvenir Program. 7 Mar. 1995. Print.

Internet Broadway Database. <http://www.ibdb.com/>. New York: The Broadway League. 2001-2013.

The Official Website of the American Theatre Wing's Tony Awards. [www.tonyawards.com](http://www.tonyawards.com). New York: IBM Global Technologies. 2000-2013.